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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the dimensions of gratifications sought (GS) and gratifications obtained (GO) from two competing network television programs--ABC's "Good Morning America" and NBC's "Today"--in terms of (1) the differences between the dimensional structure of GS and GO for the viewers of each separate program and (2) the between-program differences in GS-GO patterns. Telephone interviews were conducted with 374 individuals in an urban area. To qualify as a respondent, the individual phoned had to watch at least one of the two programs at least twice a week. The subjects were asked a series of questions designed to measure GS and GO, as well as questions concerning their perceptions of the regular personalities on each program, the format of the program, and the overall quality of the program's news coverage. Demographic information was also elicited. In general, the dimensions of GS and GO for viewers of both programs were similar. However, differences occurred for both sets of viewers when GS structure was compared to GO structure within programs. The findings suggest that GS and GO are both conceptually and empirically distinct and that this distinction can advance the understanding of mass communication processes. (FL)

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DIMENSIONS OF GRATIFICATIONS SOUGHT AND GRATIFICATIONS OBTAINED: A STUDY OF GOOD MORNING AMERICA AND TODAY

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INTRODUCTION

In a recent study, Palmgreen and Rayburn (17, p. 155) note that, "A necessary condition for scientific progress in any discipline seems to be the subjection of any theory or model, no matter how popular initially, to a period of rigorous criticism of its theoretical assumptions and predictive validity. Through this process the theory either undergoes revision or is ultimately supplanted by a new model or theory." Such has been the case with the uses and gratifications approach to the study of mass communications.

Earlier studies of the uses and gratifications phenomenon focused on the various dimensions of gratifications. Lasswell (10) conceptualized the functions as surveillance, correlation, and social transmission, to which Wright (24) contributed entertainment and the notion of dysfunctions. Subsequent studies have provided different conceptualizations, most of which are traceable to those of Lasswell and Wright. Some studies [Katz and Foulkes; (7); Nordenstreng (16); Rosengren and Windahl (20); Stephenson (21)] have focused on one or another of these gratifications. Other studies have presented different categorical schemes for the classification of gratifications [Blumler, Brown, and McQuail (3); Katz, Gurevitch, and Hass (9); Greenberg (6); Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn (19)]. Still other studies have addressed communication avoidances which stem from Wright's dysfunctions [Becker (1); Blumler and McQuail (2); McLeod and

Becker (15); Levy (11)].

While enjoying this popularity, the approach has not been without its critics. Carey and Kreiling (4) and Elliot (5) have condemned it as suffering from the problems of functionalism. Elliot (5), Weiss (25), and Swanson (22) have called it atheoretical, and Swanson (22) has noted certain important conceptual problems. A central criticism, however, has been the problem of distinguishing between gratifications sought by the audience member and corresponding gratifications perceived to be obtained. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (8,p.25) noted that, "In principle, a distinction may be drawn between a) expectations about content formed in advance of exposure and b) satisfaction subsequently secured from consumption of it. In practice, however, research workers have indiscriminately approached these phenomena from both ends." Greenberg (6, p.89) has also distinguished between gratifications sought and gratifications received. He argues that, "one cannot distinguish whether the response obtained from the viewer of the medium, or a fan of some specific content, is an accurate statement of what he wanted, or what he thinks he got... no approach has so far dealt with the parallelism or discrepancy between what was sought and what was obtained." Lometti, et al., (12, p. 337) also note that "the exact relationship between gratifications sought and actual gratifications has now been investigated. Do they become equivalent through some trial-and-error learning process, where over time one knows what to expect from a given channel and subsequently receives it?"

Certain recent studies have sought to address these criticisms. McLeod, Bybee, Durall, and Siemke (14) and McLeod, Bybee, and Durall (13)

have incorporated the sought vs. obtained conceptualization in the study of political communication and as a criterion for mass media evaluation. Palmgreen and Rayburn (17) have used the discrepancy between sought and obtained gratifications to discriminate between viewers and non-viewers of public television. Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn (18) have used a discrepancy model based on gratifications obtained to discriminate among viewers of network evening news programs. Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn (19) have also explored the relationships between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained by differentiating between the dimensions of reported gratifications sought in viewing TV news, and gratifications obtained from a respondent's favorite network news program and competing news programs. In this study it was found that the dimensions of gratifications sought (GS) and obtained (GO) from television news, while similar, nevertheless differed in important ways. While interpersonal utility and surveillance items loaded together on a single GS factor, interpersonal utility and surveillance emerged as separate GO dimensions. On the other hand, entertainment and parasocial interaction were separate dimensions of gratification seeking, but merged into a single gratification obtained dimension. Palmgreen, et al., ascribed these dimensional differences to sociopsychological mechanisms governing the seeking of TV news gratifications, and structural characteristics of television news programs which influence the perception of gratifications obtained.

While noting the internal consistency of their findings with regard to television network news, Palmgreen, et al., (19, pp. 187-188)

correctly stress that:

> The dimensional differences between gratifications sought and obtained found in this study should be an area for further investigation and replication. Such studies are needed in order to understand the frequency with which and under what conditions such differences emerge. Are there certain types of programs, audiences, content, and media which promote such differences? What are the characteristics of such programs, etc., which are respondible for differing patterns of gratifications sought and obtained?

The Present Study

The findings of the above study and the questions raised by these findings provided the impetus for examining the relationships between gratifications sought and obtained for viewers of the two dominant morning news shows, ABC's Good Morning America and the NBC Today show. These programs afforded an opportunity to replicate the Palmgreen, et al., approach using a related but slightly different content genre ("hard" news vs. news and entertainment format). As was the case with television news, Good Morning America and Today afforded a direct comparison between programs that offer the same type of content in competing time slots.

Specifically, we were interested in examining the dimensions of gratifications sought and obtained from morning news/entertainment programs by viewers of Good Morning America and Today. We were particularly interested in any differences which might emerge between the dimensional structures of gratifications sought and obtained for the viewers of each separate program. We also were interested in any between-program differences in gratification patterns which might exist.

METHODOLOGY

Telephone interviews were obtained in December, 1980, from 374 individuals in Lexington, Ky. Respondents' telephone numbers were selected through systematic random sampling from the telephone directory. To qualify as a respondent, the individual had to watch at least one program (either Today or Good Morning America) at least twice per week.

Measurement

Uses and Gratifications. Fourteen items from the Palmgreen, et al., (19) study plus four other items were used to examine gratifications.[1] The fourteen "television news" items were judged to be appropriate because of the strong television news component of the morning programs, and because several of these items were sufficiently general to apply to almost any television program. Four additional items were included to relate to specific content features of both programs: I watch (1) to get information on consumer affairs, (2) to get information about current movies, (3) to get weather information, and (4) because I like the interviews with public officials, movie stars and other celebrities. All items appear in Table 1 and are listed by hypothesized dimensions. These dimensions were largely confirmed in the Palmgreen, et al., study. Of the four items added for this study, one ("information on consumer affairs") was hypothesized to load with the political surveillance items, while the remaining three generally seemed to reflect non-political surveillance of the environment. The "like to see interviews" item might also be indicative of a need for parasocial interaction.

The questions were asked in the following manner:

> We are interested in why people watch the morning news/ entertainment shows like the Today show and Good Morning America. Here are some reasons other people have given. As I read each reason, please tell me how much that reason applies to you. If the reason very definitely applies, give it a 5; if it does not apply at all, give it a 1; if it applies somewhere in between, give it a 2,3, or 4, depending on how much it applies.

The respondent was then read the list of 18 GS items, randomly ordered.

Gratifications obtained were measured immediately after the battery of gratifications sought items. Respondents were instructed:

> Now we'd like to know to what extent the network morning programs provide you with some of the things we have just been talking about, when you get a chance to watch them...First, I want you to tell me how much that statement applies to the morning program you ordinarily watch the most. Then I want you to tell me how much you think that statement would apply to the other morning program, if you had time to watch it more often.

The respondent then replied to the same 18 items (slightly reworded) used to measure GS. For example, a Good Morning America viewer was read the statement, "Good Morning America helps me keep up with issues and events." Then he/she was read, "The Today show would help me keep up with issues and events." If respondents voiced difficulty in responding to questions concerning the other program they were told, "Just give me an estimate based on what you think you know about the program." If a respondent still could not answer, he/she was asked only about the favorite program.[2,3]

Other Measures. Data were also gathered concerning perceptions of the regular personalities on each show, the style or format of each show, and the overall quality of each program's news coverage. Certain demographic information was also collected.

RESULTS

Four separate factor analyses were conducted in order to examine the dimensions of gratifications sought by the viewers of each program, and the dimensions of gratifications obtained by each set of viewers. In each analysis, three factors were retained.[4] The percentage of total variance accounted for was as follows: GS for Good Morning America viewers - 51.1; GS for Today viewers -52.3; GO for Good Morning America viewers -60.7; and GO for Today viewers - 58.3. Table 2 displays the factor loadings for gratifications sought by both ABC and NBC viewers. Table 3 displays the factor loadings for gratifications obtained by both ABC and NBC viewers.

GS for Good Morning America Viewers. The factor structure for gratifications sought by ABC viewers indicates three separate dimensions of seeking behavior.

The first factor may be characterized as drama/interpersonal utility. Two of the three entertainment-drama items have high loadings on this factor, as do all four interpersonal utility items. The factor structure suggests seeking of information which is dramatic and exciting and which can be passed on to others. Information on movies may fit these criteria for most viewers, and this may explain why the movie item also loaded on this factor.

The second factor clearly involves political surveillance, with all six items from that hypothesized dimension displaying strong loadings. In an unforeseen development, the "weather information" item also had its strongest loading on this factor.

The third factor indicates a seeking of content and/or structural characteristics which are both entertaining and allow parasocial interaction. Items such as "I watch the morning programs because they are often entertaining" or "exciting" load with items such as "newscasters give a human quality to the news" and "the hosts are like people I know." The item concerning "interviews with public officials, movie stars, and other celebrities," which, as stated earlier, may also reflect a need for parasocial interaction, also loaded on this factor.

In this analysis, only three items had loadings of .40 or better on more than one factor. "Exciting," "hosts like people I know", and "can trust information they give" loaded twice, but the primary loadings were along hypothesized dimensions.

GS for Today Viewers. The factor structure for gratifications sought by Today viewers also indicates three separate dimensions of seeking behavior. In general, the same three dimensions found for ABC viewers were found for NBC viewers. As a rule, the items that clustered on the dimensions for the ABC viewers also clustered together for the NBC viewers.

As with the ABC viewers, the first factor for the NBC viewers was a drama/interpersonal utility factor. Viewers reported viewing because the programs were "exciting," "dramatic," "to pass on information to others," "to get things to talk about," etc. The "information on movies" item also loaded on this factor, as it did on the ABC analysis.

The second GS factor for Today viewers was very similar to the third factor for viewers of Good Morning America. Again, both entertainment and parasocial interaction items clustered together, although in this analysis the parasocial interaction items showed higher loadings than the entertainment

items, the reverse of the Today findings. One interpersonal utility item ("gives me things to talk about") and one surveillance item ("can trust information they give me") also had loadings greater than .40 on this factor, although the former item had its primary loading on the drama/interpersonal utility factor.

The third factor in this analysis was similar to the second factor in the ABC analysis. Here again items clustered to form a political surveillance dimension, although one of the six political surveillance items, "can trust information they give me," wandered onto the parasocial interaction/entertainment factor (as discussed previously). Three of four hypothesized interpersonal utility items had loadings ranging from .39 to .45 on this factor, strong enough to suggest a resemblance between this factor and the surveillance/interpersonal utility GS factor reported in the Palmgreen, et al., (19) study of television news. At least to some extent viewers of the Today program connect seeking of information about the political environment with disseminating this information to others interpersonally, although clearly, as with ABC viewers, interpersonal utility is more strongly connected with dramatic and exciting content.

GO for Good Morning America Viewers. The factor structure for gratifications obtained by viewers of Good Morning America varies somewhat from the seeking behavior of these same individuals. The first factor is dominated by what we have termed political surveillance items, but these items cluster with the four interpersonal utility items. This indicates that viewers connect finding of political information with passing this information on to others. In the GS analysis, however, these emerged as two separate motivations for watching morning programs.

The second factor may be termed drama/interpersonal utility, and is therefore very similar to the GS factor identified earlier for these same viewers. All three drama/entertainment items have their highest loadings on the factor, while three of the four interpersonal utility items also exhibit substantial loadings. The movie information item also loads here, as in the GS analysis. Thus in this area there is a close match between what viewers are seeking from the television experience and what they perceive they are finding.

The third factor is clearly dominated by two items from the hypothesized non-political surveillance dimension: "weather information," and "interviews." The interpersonal utility item "hosts give a human quality to news" has a secondary loading on this factor, while the political surveillance item "can trust information they give me" had its highest loading here. The latter item, however, essentially loaded on all three factors in this particular analysis.

GO for Today Viewers. The pattern of gratifications obtained for Today show viewers is similar to the GO factor structure for Good Morning America viewers, although the similarity across viewer groups is not as striking as that observed for gratifications sought.

Here again items cluster to form a drama/interpersonal utility factor (Factor I), indicating a close match between seeking and obtaining processes. The two major parasocial interaction items also load strongly on this item, however. As such, this factor may be viewed as a merger of the drama/interpersonal utility and parasocial interaction/entertainment factors which emerged in the GS analysis for this viewer subgroup. It should be noted that one parasocial interaction item ("hosts are like people I know")

also loaded on the comparable GO factor in the Good Morning America analysis. Thus the structural GO connection between dramatic-entertaining elements and parasocial interaction elements observed in the Palmgreen, et al., (19) television news study emerges here in a somewhat altered format. Also, particularly for Today viewers, the juxtaposition of these elements in the pattern of gratifications obtained corresponds to the seeking behavior for these gratifications.

The second factor is characterized by all six of the political surveillance items and three of the four interpersonal utility items, making it a close match to the political surveillance/interpersonal utility factor discovered in the GO analysis for ABC viewers. Again, then, viewers connect finding of political information with passing it on through political discussion. It should be remembered that there was also evidence of this connection for gratifications sought by Today viewers.

The third factor consists of all three hypothesized non-political surveillance items ("movies," "weather," and "interviews"), and thus is similar to the third GO factor for ABC viewers. The factor also included two political surveillance items ("consumer affairs" and "issues affecting people like me"). These items, however, also double load on the political surveillance interpersonal utility factor.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are best discussed within the context of the Palmgreen et al.,(19) study of evening television news, since similar methodologies were employed to provide comparative data. Such comparison reveals that the dimensional structures of both gratifications sought and obtained from morning news/entertainment programs are very different from their evening television news counterparts. This dissimilarity may be due to differences in audience members or differing content/structural characteristics, or both.

Gratifications Sought

The Palmgreen,et al.,study found three major dimensions of gratifications sought from network evening news: interpersonal utility/surveillance (political), entertainment, and parasocial interaction. For viewers of morning programs in this study the factors were drama/interpersonal utility, political surveillance, and entertainment/parasocial interaction.

Drama/Interpersonal Utility, Political Survelliance. The drama/interpersonal utility dimension indicates seeking of dramatic, exciting content closely linked with perceived interpersonal utility of that content. The programs themselves certainly are structured to provide such content in abundance. Language, paralanguage, and various audio-visual techniques of the television production craft are manipulated to imbue a health segment on acne with the drama of a presidential debate. This is in contrast to the evening news GS findings, where interpersonal utility was linked with political surveillance information. This distinction seems consistent with the varying purposes, emphases, and content of the two kinds of program. On the other hand, there was some tendency for

interpersonal utility items to load with political surveillance items for Today show viewers. This may indicate a greater news orientation of those viewers compared to the audience of Good Morning America. Even here, though, the factor structure indicates that the social value of information is most closely associated with its dramatic characteristics, particularly for ABC viewers. Program content (news or otherwise) must be dramatic and exciting to be of greatest interpersonal use to the morning audience.

Entertainment / Parasocial Interaction. Palmgreen, et al., (19) argued that various structural features of television news — e.g., use of videotape of people in the news, availability of various audio-visual nonverbal cues—resulted in the merger of entertainment-drama and parasocial interaction items on a single gratification obtained dimension. In other words, these structural features have entertainment value, while simultaneously promoting the ability of the viewer to interact with news personnae as if they are "like people I know." At the same time, their finding of separate gratification sought dimensions of entertainment and parasocial interaction led them to conclude that "the seeking of entertainment and parasocial interaction are governed by different socio-psychological mechanisms" (19, p. 187), and that these mechanisms may override content-media attributes in seeking behavior.

This apparently is not the case for viewers of Today and Good Morning America, where entertainment and parasocial items emerged on the same GS dimension. This merger may be due to the much greater entertainment emphasis of morning news/entertainment programs compared to evening news programs. The hosts themselves reflect this lighter tone with banter similar to the "happy talk" format of local news programs. At the same time, this casual,

conversational approach renders the morning hosts more "human," and thus easier to interact with parasocially. These characteristics may attract the sort of viewer who seeks parasocial interaction with warm, outgoing television personalities in the context of entertainment and drama.

Gratifications Obtained

The dimensions of gratifications obtained from evening television news found by Palmgreen, et al., (19) were interpersonal utility, surveillance, and entertainment/parasocial interaction. In this study, although some between-program differences existed, we found that the gratifications viewers perceived they obtained from morning programs could be described generally in terms of three factors: drama/interpersonal utility/parasocial interaction, political surveillance/interpersonal utility, and non-political surveillance. The latter factor consisted of items specifically related to morning programs, and thus cannot be discussed from a comparative perspective.

Drama/Interpersonal Utility/Parasocial Interaction. We have already discussed the reasons why drama may be connected with interpersonal utility, and why drama (entertainment) may be linked with parasocial interaction in morning programs. The emergence of these three kinds of gratification items on a single dimension supports the thesis that a particular content type may serve multiple functions for audience members. While drama/interpersonal utility and entertainment/parasocial interaction may be sought separately by viewers of morning programs, the interaction of content and perceptual processes causes them to be obtained together. The association of entertainment and parasocial interaction on this dimension parallels the finding of the evening news study.

Political Surveillance/Interpersonal Utility. Palmgreen, et al., (19, p. 187) state that "the finding of separate GO dimensions of surveillance and interpersonal utility indicates that viewers distinguish two types of TV news information--one kind valuable for making decisions, and informed political participation; and another whose value is chiefly social." Social information, they say "may involve essentially non-issue-related elements, such as information about accidents, natural diasters, popular nonpolitical figures, the personal lives of politicians, and so on" (p. 187). Much of this social information is dramatic and entertaining in nature, and may partially account for the GO connection between drama and interpersonal utility found for morning programs. Political surveillance information also has social value, however, for the viewers of morning programs. Because this kind of information is basically the same in both morning and evening news programs, the discrepancy in the GO structure here may be due to differences between the audiences for the two types of programs. The findings point to a more socially oriented audience for the morning news/entertainment programs, with both political and/or dramatic information serving a need for social exchange.

Conclusions

A comparison of the Palmgreen, et al., (19) study of television news with this study reveals clear differences between evening news programs and morning news/entertainment programs regarding the dimensions of gratifications sought and obtained. This contrast may be attributed to both program and audience differences. What is also striking is the internal consistency of the findings of the two studies. While Palmgreen, et al., report the GS factor structure for only one group (all viewers),

they report five GO factor structures which are remarkably similar to one another (while clearly differing from the GS pattern). In this study we found very similar GS factor structures for both viewers of Today and Good Morning America, a moderately good fit between the two GO factor structures, and once again clear differences in the GS vs. GO comparisons.

The internal consistency of the two studies is evidence for the reliability of the reported findings. On the other hand, the difference in GS vs. GO dimensions observed in both studies offers further support for the sought vs. obtained conceptualization. The evidence to date indicates that gratifications sought and obtained are both conceptually and empirically distinct, and that this distinction can advance our understanding of mass communication processes.

FOOTNOTES

[1] One item from the Palmgreen, et al., study, "I watch so I won't be surprised by higher prices and things like that," was omitted because of its failure in that study to load in any consistent pattern on the factors identified.

[2] Of the 374 respondents, fewer than 4% could not give gratifications obtained responses for both programs.

[3] In a separate reliability study involving 15 of the items used here [reported in Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn (17)], the average test-retest correlation for the GO items was .71. The mean for the GS items was .65.

[4] A principal components factoring method with iteration and communality estimates used in the diagonal of the correlation matrix was used with varimax rotation. A minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 was the criterion for factoring. This yielded a three-factor solution in one case and a four-factor solution in the other three cases. In each of the three cases, there was only one item that had its highest loading on the fourth factor (which only accounted for slightly more than 1% of total variance). Because of the doubt about the meaning of these fourth factors, a three factor solution was substituted.

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TABLE 1

Gratifications Sought Items Listed by Hypothesized Dimensions

Political Surveillance

1. I watch the morning programs to keep up with current issues and events.
2. I watch the morning programs to find out what kind of job our government officials are doing.
3. I watch to get information on consumer affairs.
4. I watch to help me make up my mind about important issues.
5. I watch because I get information I can trust.
6. I watch to find out about issues affecting people like myself.

Non-Political Surveillance

1. I watch to get information about current movies.
2. I watch to get weather information.
3. I watch because I like the interviews with public officials, movie stars, and other celebrities.

Entertainment/Drama

1. I watch the morning programs because they are often entertaining.
2. I watch the morning programs because they are often dramatic.
3. I watch the morning programs because they are often exciting.

Interpersonal Utility

1. I watch to give me information to support my own viewpoints to other people.
2. I watch so that I can pass the information on to other people.
3. I watch to compare my own ideas to what the hosts and others on the program say.
4. I watch to give me interesting things to talk about.

Parasocial Interaction

1. I watch because the hosts and other personalities on the show give a human quality to the news and events of the day.
2. I watch because the hosts are like people I know.

TABLE 2

Factor Matrices for Gratifications Sought from ABC's Good Morning America and NBC's Today Show

	GS-ABC			GS-NBC		
	I	II	III	I	II	III
eep up with current issues & events	12	51	06	-03	04	46
ind out about government officials	14	63	-03	27	26	49
nformation on consumer affairs	27	45	21	17	21	45
ake up mind about important issues	33	46	09	30	15	60
an trust information they give	40*	41	35	34	47	29
ind issues affecting people like me	24	56	31	17	33	55
nformation about movies	54	02	32	45	15	04
eather information	18	46	17	01	37	32
ike to see interviews	10	26	58	15	57	29
rograms are often entertaining	25	01	60	32	47	05
rograms are often dramatic	79	10	09	60	33	07
rograms are often exciting	61*	-03	64	70	42*	07
upport viewpoints to others	39	33	14	59	02	43*
ass information to other people	54	28	23	63	13	39
ompare own ideas to hosts'	48	24	24	37	35	45
ives me things to talk about	48	25	36	59	43*	34
osts give human quality to news	16	37	54	25	60	16
osts are like people I know	41*	18	47	35	56	22
	n = 163			n = 184		

-Primary loading
Major secondary loading

TABLE 3

Factor Matrices for Gratifications Obtained from NBC Good Morning America and NBC's Today Show

	GO-ABC			GO-NBC		
	I	II	III	I	II	III
Keep up with current issues & events	69	06	25	07	57	09
Find out about government officials	69	15	19	22	50	23
Information on consumer affairs	63	23	26	24	48*	50
Make up mind about important issues	56	38	15	27	68	20
Can trust information they give	39	37	43	43*	48	32
Find issues affecting people like me	66	30	37	24	47	44*
Information about movies	19	52	23	15	12	45
Weather information	29	25	65	21	14	41
Like to see interviews	31	26	67	26	15	73
Programs are often entertaining	16	56	38	64	16	36
Programs are often dramatic	14	64	09	69	23	22
Programs are often exciting	14	72	26	72	28	23
Support viewpoints to others	50*	57	07	48*	55	20
Pass information to other people	52	52	20	41*	59	17
Compare own ideas to hosts'	64	30	19	56	31	38
Gives me things to talk about	41*	58	32	55*	62	16
Hosts give human quality to news	48	34	44*	58	32	23
Hosts are like people I know	35	47	28	56	24	28
	n = 163			n = 184		

—Primary loading

* Major secondary loading